



## U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney  
Eastern District of Wisconsin*

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Press Release

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### **Milwaukee Man Charged with Arson by Explosion and other Crimes Connected to Fire that Destroyed Pizza Man Restaurant and other Businesses**

United States Attorney James L. Santelle announced today that a federal grand jury sitting in the Eastern District of Wisconsin has returned a multi-count indictment against Feras Rahman (age: 27), of Milwaukee. The indictment alleges that Rahman committed the January 19, 2010, arson of the building formerly located at 1800 - 1814 East North Avenue in Milwaukee. This building housed Rahman's restaurant, The Black and White Café and also three other restaurants on the first level, including The Pizza Man, and numerous residential apartments on the second level. The building was razed as a result of the fire, and the loss was estimated to be in excess of \$3 million.

The specific charges set forth in the indictment include Arson by Explosion in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 844(i), Mail Fraud in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1341, Arson to Commit Mail Fraud in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 844(h), and False Statements in a Federal Investigation in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1001.

Because the fire resulted in injuries to several firefighters, the Arson by Explosion count is punishable by a minimum mandatory term of seven years in prison and a maximum term of 40 years in prison. The count alleging Arson to Commit Mail Fraud is punishable by a mandatory sentence of 10 years in prison, which must run consecutive to any sentence imposed on any of the other counts.

In announcing today's charges, United States Attorney Santelle stated: "I commend all of the federal, state, and local law enforcement officers and agents involved in the investigation of this case for their highly professional and collaborative work. Their focus on and attention to this matter since the time of the arson—along with the work of federal and county prosecutors—reflects our commitment to pursue aggressively violent crimes of all types—not only to ensure the safety and well-being of our community but also to discourage those who might otherwise be inclined to engage in highly destructive behaviors of this sort."

Fred Milanowski, Assistant Special Agent in Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives stated, "The potential loss of life of building occupants, responding law enforcement or fire service personnel is what makes arson such a violent crime. We are very fortunate that no one was killed as a result of this senseless act."

This indictment is premised upon a 16-month investigation conducted by special agents of the United States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, in cooperation with the Wisconsin Department of Justice - Division of Criminal Investigation, the Milwaukee Police Department, the Milwaukee Fire Department, and the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Elizabeth M. Blackwood.

An indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. A defendant is presumed innocent and is entitled to a fair trial at which the government must prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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For additional information contact:

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